

F E M M E S
U N I T E !





F.A.G. PDX (Femme Affinity Group Portland) is a radical ACTIVIST AND SOCIAL group that seeks to create solidarity among femmes, promote femme visibility and combat femme phobia in the community at large. The group is open to self-identified femmes of all genders.

As always, we'd love to have you join us for discussion, events, and other fun. We meet every fourth Sunday of the month at 2pm at In Other Words bookstore (8 NE Killingsworth St.). If you'd like more information, drop us an email at fagpdx@notsorry.org, find us on Friendster or MySpace, or join our mailing list at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/fagpdx>.

Check out our website and order Femmes United at:
<http://www.notsorry.org/fagpdx>

Send love letters and mail-orders to:

Femme Affinity Group
P.O. Box 14114
Portland, OR 97293





It's hard to believe that it's been a year since we made our last zine, all spread out cutting up text and eating cookies on someone's hardwood floor. That night was like magic. We were all creating together, so fucking excited to have something to show to the world. *Here we are and you can't ignore us anymore.* Our group has done a lot of growing and changing since then and we're thrilled to be releasing yet another zine, this time in conjunction with a femme art show and performance.

Our femme community here in Portland is so big and as you might imagine, we're all very different folks. We've got fatties, anarchists, bottoms, tops, switches, dykes, fags, mtfs, ftms, lesbians, survivors, punks, midwesterners, southerners, college grads, high school drop outs, radicals, indoor and outdoor femmes ... the list could go on forever. If there's anything we've learned, it's that femme is not a singular restrictive box to fit ourselves into. Being femme is only part of who each of us are. (Just glance at the biography pages and you'll see what we mean!) In this zine we tried to address some of our other identities and how they overlap with the glamour and strength of our femmeness. We hope that you can see some of yourself here and that it sparks exciting thought and discussion.

Love and sensible shoes,
Femme Affinity Group Portland



Gimme a F-E-M-M-E
What's that spell? SOLIDARITY!

You don't know who we are?
It's pretty clear.
We're sassy femmes
and we're genderqueer.

Femmes are joining forces,
you can hear the roar.
We're not gonna be
invisible anymore!

VENUS
ENVY

It's not about what we wear
or who we fuck.
We're strong & fierce
and we've had enough!

Femmes unite!
Show them yr might.
Femmes unite!
Come out and fight.

B-D-S-M

What does it spell? FUN!

Be a bottom, be a top

C'mon ladies, grab yr crop!

Be a robber, be a cop

Once you start, you'll never stop.

Tie me up, tie me down

Tickle me and bite me.

Sticks and stones may break my bones
but whips and chains excite me.

Get kinky, yea yeah, get kinky, uh huh!



I used to be (clap clap clap)
vanilla plain (clap clap clap)
but now I've mastered (clap clap clap)
the art of pain, uh huh!

SAFE! SANE! CONSENSUAL!

(femmes love boys too)

By Katrina Enyeart

Between you and me,
I want to be objectified.
still want to be idolized.
I'll be your accessory, if you'll be mine.
We can change the world, brick by brick and mind by mind
while keeping eachother secrets,
achilles heels stumbling on four inches of awkward
keeping realities in the bedroom,
in the forest, hell in the car
we're young, and the sex, is natural
its the gender that's manufactured
consent, my prison on your body, in his divinified image
the image of flux, half finished polaroids
we are hungry for the finished product
we are hungry for the
blameless diversion for
shameless penetration
its ok sweetie this is candy. coated. queer.
to a world that craves bitter sweet, tragedies,
irreverent comedies, invisibility and greed.
I want to be objectified,
Femme is a language of sex and sexuality,
femaleness apparent, created, or augmented,
in-your-face flyfishing
pulling lust from the deepest depths of your soul.
Red like caution
pink fragility
blue for
Boy, you know how
desperately,
trecharously,
I have
Daydreams of running my fingers
through you
through your hair and
inviting you so deep in me
I can't figure out where
my cunt ends
and my soul begins
you should've been a dyke
if god played her cards right
if it's just the way nature
chose to make you
she chose right
to make you mine



you date dykes
because Dude-man-bro
is a foreign language
Alix Olson, Ani D a colloquialism

you picked up from

a lucky childhood

you met

too many tough girls
bearing their teeth

bearing their breasts

you saw revolution

in breast milk

poetry and

tears

and

most importantly

yes most important of all

in

yourself

If you see me striding through the hallways of a certain high-tech company in Hillsboro, feel free to say hello. I'm the middle-aged dyke in blue-collar work clothes and worn steel-toed boots - as butch as can be. But what Butch wears a pink baseball cap?

My femme side gets stomped flat while I'm working. First of all, men's work clothes are often cheaper, more comfortable and more durable, and a hard hat turns any hairdo into a hair-don't. And it may be wrong, it may set "femme-inist" teeth on edge, but girly doesn't go over well with The Boys. Believe me, I've heard the comments. It's a lot harder to earn respect on the job while wearing a tight T-shirt or low-rise jeans. (I joke that showing my cleavage is a safety hazard; coworkers fall off ladders or walk into walls).

So how do I morph into a girly-girl off-the-clock? Not very easily.

I guess you could call me a "butch-to-femme trans". I spent my formative years as a tomboy - especially compared to my sister: she is always well-dressed, well-accessorized, effortlessly stylish. My attempts always came up a bit short. So for me, a butch look was part defiance, part laziness, part avoidance, part body armor. I was a young activist dyke uncomfortable with her body.

Ah, how I grieve when I think back about my younger figure and how much I tried to hide it! How sad that it took me the better part of four decades to love my big tits, and to work up the courage to be a sexy, self-assured Girl. When I was younger, being feminine was a hassle, a hurdle, a hazard. Now it is a pleasure, a privilege, a proud celebration - even if it's still a hassle. Where does a 40-year-old former tomboy go to learn about hair, makeup, accessories and fashion? Makeup counters terrify me. I hate clothes shopping. I love heels, but can't walk in them.

Growing up, I hated the phrase, "you'd be so much prettier if...." Now, I've gotta admit, they had a point. I *am* prettier with a little makeup, with softer clothes that hug my curves. And I'll also admit, I like being pretty.

What makes a girl a Femme? How is "Femme" – with a capital F different than feminine?

I've always dated garden-variety dykes; we throw around terms like "femmy butch" or "butchy femme," but they're descriptions, not designations. Now, I've fallen in love with a Butch, an old-fashioned, old-school Butch with a capital B, who has always dated high maintenance ultra-femmes. At times I feel like I've blundered into a foreign country.

I work a "man's" job. I am used to carrying as much weight as I can to prove to The Boys that I don't want special treatment. As often as possible, I try to figure out ways to use leverage and strategy to do what I need to do before I ask for help. I can't turn that part of me off in the rest of my life, although it is nice to have someone open doors for me. But Femme isn't Butch's inverse mirror. I am not going to pretend that I don't know how to drive a forklift or use a jackhammer. My girlfriend is not less Butch because of anything I do, or don't do. But I wonder sometimes if she can see that.

Sometimes she looks at me out of the corner of her eye and asks, "Are you *sure* you're not Butch?"

All I can say is, "I'm sure I don't *want* to be Butch."

That's the critical difference. I yearn toward the feminine while at the same time fearing that I'll never get it right. That yearning – and my small celebrations, my tentative exploration of girliness – should be enough to make me femme... shouldn't it?

It's enough for me.

BY AMETHYST FIST

It took me a long time to come out as Fat. I had come out many times before as queer then femme but Fat was defiantly the hardest. I had a community of queers around me but no support it was hard enuf being a femme in a community of andro-genderqueer skinny-kids that I had very little in common with other then the fact that we were queer. I felt ashamed and invisible and stupid all because I was Fat. I hated myself and felt unworthy of love, The people that I did date I let them treat me like shit because I thought they were doing me a favor by dating me a "Fat grrrl" I would only fuck with the lights off and I would only lay on my back to appear flatter. When I was 19 I came across the writings of Nomy Lamm and it was like a light switch went off in my head. I dove head first into Fat grrrl zines. I realized that I did have a community there were people out there fighting for Fat acceptance and most importantly I learned how to love my FAT Ever since that day my life has never been the same. I have devoted my life to FAT activism I took a major step 5 years ago when I reclaimed myself and my body by having the words "FAT BITCH" tattooed across my stomach. Fat Bitch is always what comes outta peoples mouths when they want to insult me. If I am confronting some guy on the bus for saying something fucked-up to the grrrl sitting next to him , its always "shut up" or some other similar comment but I guarantee you it will always end with "Fat Bitch" So I reclaimed it, I embrace it and I get Power from it. It gives me courage to continue fighting. But most importantly it has nurtured me and helped me to love myself and my fat body, it has taught me that I am worth it and I am Fucking beautiful.

"Um, Like, Totally!": The politics and personal history of a femme-inist vernacular.

By, Adrienne Graf

I have been femme as long as I remember. I never went through a tomboy phase; I was never "one of the boys". One of the main indications that warned everyone early on of my panache for wigs, small dogs and Miami was my voice. Obnoxious and shrill, it would float above all the other children's voices, shrieking about ponies and dolphins and princesses.

I was valley before valley hit the Pacific NW, clutching my Lisa Frank trapper keeper, clanking my bracelet-laden wrists, scowling and "WHAT-EVER"ing to the boys in my grade. My chatty behavior was noticed at an early age by peers and my countrified family (thanks, guys) and pretty much not taken seriously. EVER. With the lilt of my voice (I have always talked with the intonation of my words rising towards the end of sentence) and the sentence enhancers I used (like, so, what, totally, etc.) I learned pretty early on that the way I talked was perceived as stupid and laughed at. (Oh yeah, side note: Clueless was like my fucking Bible. OBVI!)

Fast forward to "adulthood"- I had managed to escape high school via riot grrrl and being a baby dyke, but now, in the adult world, I was discovering some folks still behaved like children. In the wasteland that was anarchist activism coupled with the equally triflin' Portland Dyke Scene (and I use capitalization cuz it felt THAT BIG, you know?) it was still not okay to talk and dress the way that I talk and dress.

I was a part of an anarchist collective, joined partially because I really wanted friends and community (which I was not finding in the dyke/queer community at the time), partially because my 17-year-old girlfriend was involved and MOSTLY because I fervently believed in the ideals of mutual aid, and anarchist community.

I just felt like a giant joke the whole time. The guys I would work with or meet either wanted to fuck me or thought I sounded stupid, and I was attacked via phone message by an older dyke in the community who told me that I needed to "learn how to talk smarter when representing anarchism" and basically told me to "go back to the mall". I remember sitting in my bedroom, listening to her voicemail over and over again, crying and totally hating myself.

It did not stop there. I am not writing this essay to air my grievances (hi, I have therapy for that, and plus I am totally grown up now!) but to illustrate how hostile and sexist I found my radical/queer community at the time.

A myriad of really crazy shit happened to me including but NOT limited to: mocking (in front of my face) by a group of young dykes who were supposed to be my friends, various people rolling their eyes when I was talking, needing to "prove" my smarts while anarchist organizing because my behavior and appearance was off-putting, **constant**, persistent invalidation from dykes and other queers, getting laughed at (loudly) at many many many punk events, or being blackballed by some members of what I thought was my community while my supposed actions were assumed as "crazy" and "bitchy" and "gossipy" (all feminized flaws, might I point out). One time I entered a local business where my friend was working to visit her and chat, and when I left, her female coworker (who strongly identifies as a feminist) complained about how when women (i.e.: me) "up-talk" (aka: the normal way my voice is) they sound stupid. Cool.

I freaked out, I internalized everyone's crazy sexism, I hated myself. But you know what? I couldn't stop. I did not know how to "talk smarter" or look and sound more "appropriate". I just couldn't stop myself, I was like a runaway gay train, speeding along golden tracks, with Nathan Lane in a peacock suit as the conductor, and there was simply nothing I could do.

So sorry I don't sound the way you want me to, look the way you want me to, or that I am unable to be quiet when something triflin' is going on. Part of my gender liberation is that all genders can be radical and smart, and that includes up-talkers.

Let's change the way "intelligence" sounds! To think that ONLY one way of talking is intelligent is not only sexist but hella racist, classist, ableist, and regionalist (giving a shout out to my amazing drawling southern friends here, you all sound hella smart to me!).

Included below is a brief (very incomplete) list of totally femme-inist words you can pepper your daily speech with. Try one out!

And next time you are around a woman or lady person (or anyone for that matter), and you think they sound unintelligent, really check yourself on why you think that.

xoxo adrienne

BTW, or BTdubs: by the way

Use in a sentence: "BTW, that skirt you are wearing is so fierce!"

FIERCE: amazing, good, unique

Use in a sentence: See above!

LOVES IT: really being excited about something, really appreciating something

Use in a sentence: OMG, I loves it when you make such amazing, poignant art!

OBVI: obviously

Use in a sentence: "I obvi have a crush on that hot dandy butch!"

SERIAL: seriously

Use in a sentence: "The show was so gay, serial!"

SO HEGEMONIC: something really patriarchal or oppressive

Use in a sentence: "The policy about gender at Michigan Women's Festival is so hegemonic!"

TOTALS(Z): totally

Use in a sentence: "That lip liner I like is totalz on sale at MAC" or "I think the new immigration policy being drafted in Congress is totals bullshit!"

TRIFLIN': trying, annoying, etc.

Use in a sentence: "That triflin' dude at the bar last night actually tried to grab my boob!"

For info on up-talking you can keyword search: high rising terminal, high rising intonation, or "up-speak".

Also, linguistically speaking, up-talking is not seen as always a sign of questioning or doubt. Linguists agree that in the English language having a high rising intonation does not necessarily signify a question, in fact, the intonation of some forms of questioning will rise then fall at the end.

FIERCE!

Let's see... (take care of yourself as ya read this one my friends)

I've had this survivor identity for years now. Organizing speak outs at my conservative college campus in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. Realizing shortly that I wasn't college material. even if most of the people I knew were also there on scholarships, loans or balancing full time jobs & classes. the first in our families to enter those big gates. So much riding on our entrance into a different class. But my history of abuse and its intersections in my femme identity aren't about class right... (insert chuckle cause that's a whole other story to write my friends)

This story its about my step dad who is a Vietnam vet and worked as a janitor at a local community college while I was growing up. He would come home and drink away the day's torments and pain. And while reaching out for his Jack and water would reach out to the two kids now in his house. Uncomfortable with my sister's loud mouth and with my body just well being in the way. My step dad introduced the idea that my body could be bruised and used as a tool for his pain. Not something to house my own pain. My own choices.

This story its about my step mom. she introduced the idea that my body was well fat. ugly. dirty. My hair. In her words, 'nappy'. And was "I surre I was my dad's child..." She introduced something new. Not being enough.

My attempts at fashion ruined by the reminder that my clothes were patterns picked out at Wal-mart and sewed by my poor mother. My samples of clinique make up not really matching my skin tone, again not enough. My body was now a constant makeover. Needing work. Sometimes she had time to help me. Often times there was only time to ridicule me. Remind me of my acne. My big belly and how the, 'boys would never like me if I didn't loose some weight'. So there in those weekend lectures. grew my self-doubt. dreaming of being the popular ze at school with the 'right kind of skin' the 'right kind of hair' the 'right kind of body'. There in that dream world would my happiness. Right?

Well. Luckily that idea of happiness didn't last long. So I turned from eating my step moms words of hate (aka: her self-hate) to throwing them up in her face. I have my first girlfriend, tribe 8, bell hooks and my own self-determination to thank. Plus, the physical and sexual abuse had halted in my life. So I was kind of like, "shit I've dealt with all of this other bullshit. You are not worthy of anymore tears." So I focused on killing off her words with being FUCKING HOT

I decided my revenge would be my beauty.

I distanced myself from her and from the self-doubt and hatred she was trying to pass along to me. I could go into more detail about the fucked up shit she did to try and tear me down, to prove she was in control of me when she realized she wasn't. But I'm done with it. I've learned from it. I started yelling out with my clothes. My Body. My Style. My self-love attitude. I feel this is where I connect my femme identity to just the self-fucking love. that I learned in those years where I was being taught self-fucking hate.

So. I posed nude for the art department in college. Unzipping my flowery muumuu- exposing my stretch marks, body hair and big handsome sicilian body! I saw the class clear their throats. Unsure what to do with this hairy big breasted person. I made friends with them. Told them about the feminist group I was starting on campus. Invited them to speak outs and marches. I took adventures to the thrift stores of my childhood buying grandmother dresses and frilly shirts. The gay community my supposed community did not understand me. I was a 'skirt' to the lesbians. A hairy radical queer feminist who wore second hand dresses and short skirts to the rugby games... Insert my rejection and isolation in the gay community in Mississippi. My home.

This isn't about that rejection though.

This is about my rejection of those years where my picture was taken off the wall at one house, while I was being slammed against the wall at the other. its about my mind trying to understand the incest in my childhood, which made me retreat to deep places in my mind that told me I would never be 'right' or loved.

We are always still growing. Always facing the past. I'm going through different body issues now. Different feelings now as I express my genderqueer self, while dancing with my femme self. Binding these double D's but still wearing my short skirts. Deciding what genders to express each day. Add my favorite broach to each outfit. Add in my walk of self-love. Add in all that has helped me in my life to love all that I am. All that I want to be. All that I was taught I couldn't be. It's secretly really fucking exciting though. Shhh. Don't tell anyone. But I love myself. And you so fuckin much.

- dana rae.

If ya wanna talk smack bout your childhood etc. just email me!

danaraeparker@gmail.com

FAT FASHIONABLE * FANCY * FEMME * FREAK *

until moving to Portland and meeting other out and proud femmes, i never identified as femme, (though of course i have always been flaming). i didn't want that name for myself, just like for a long time, i wasn't comfortable calling myself FEMINIST, QUEER, or FAT. FEMME is another aspect of my identity i had to learn to love, and i am loving it.

i didn't want to be femme. i was in a relationship where i internalized some femme-phobia. my x would often point out that she was attracted to others who looked boyish or androgynous. That look has never been an easy option for me, because of my ultra girly voice and body. it also isn't who i am. i could tell she was more attracted to me when i wore jeans and a t-shirt, and it wasn't a good feeling. (ironically, she recently told me she has a major hard on for mostly femmes.)

i feel like our queer community privileges folk who present as more masculine. it is still, mistakenly, what many people identify as visibly or "more truly" queer. sometimes i will walk down the street and another queer will look right through me. i see queerness in all different kinds of people. i am also not exclusively attracted to those with masculine or androgynous gender presentations

ever since I was a little girl, i have liked to wear mostly skirts and dresses. when i was younger, i owned one pair of dark blue denim pants with a lady bug patch on the pocket. they lived in my closet. i never wore them. i was adamantly against them, even though they were hella cute.

i prefer skirts and dresses. i dig the way they fit my form and flatter my curves. i like to spin and twirl in them. i like to flip up my skirt. i like how the wind balloons under my skirt. dresses are fun and sexy. i am drawn to certain colors and combinations. i like to wear things that make me feel sexy. i like to flatter my breasts and curves. my waist. my cute belly and round ass

i really appreciate a well dressed person in masculine duds, but i personally find the look boring for myself. sometimes i will don a red collared shirt under black sweater vest, paired with pants. i find myself quickly adding beads and bracelets, buttons and a hair bow, and then laugh to myself, having "blown" the look. it's hilarious. my femme isn't about wearing dresses, so much as it is about being FANCY.



i am a totally fashionable lady. i am an artist. i like to look good because it makes me feel good. i enjoy costumes. i see what i am wearing and how i present myself to the world as political, transmitting messages about who i am. i do not fit into what many people would consider "fashionable," because i am FAT, and sometimes i wear ugly clothes in ridiculous combinations. just the same, i am undoubtedly FASHIONABLE and not afraid to claim it.



one has to wear clothes every day, so one might as well have fun with them. what i wear directly effects how i feel. if my clothes are uncomfortable, i feel ill at ease all day long. if i am wearing something i like and feel good in, i am more confident and able in my every day life. i like to present myself as counter-cultural which is another aspect of my personality. i want my clothes to be fucked up, slightly off, rebellious and anti-mainstream; individualized.



i am a purveyor of FATSHION. this means squeezing into things "they" might think are too small for me. this means "rocking the frump." lots of fat clothes are frumpy, so you have to learn how to rock it, meaning fuck it up, don it ironically, or mix it with other stuff to make it look amazing. if a dress is really cute but doesn't fit my fat arms, i will hack away at it to make it more comfortable. altering clothes, dressing them up, accessorizing them wildly, these are all aspects of being the punk fucked up fat queer femme girl that i proudly am.



sometimes i think people are intimidated by my presentation. i am a gorgeous fashionable fat queer femme girl who is smart sexy confident and COMFORTABLE in her skin. a lot of people are intimidated by this, and that is *their* problem. i find that a lot of people are inspired by it as well. it is what suits me best, so get into it, or get over it.



BUCKETS OF LOVE FOREVER.



dreamboat.

QUEERING MY FEET

By, Jenny Bruso

It all started with a pair of gold high heels. (Um, talk about the most perfect beginning sentence ever.) I was strolling down the aisles of beautiful shoes knowing damn well that I absolutely did not need another pair and that the wrenching guilt I was feeling would not be abated by the sheer joy that a new pair of shoes gives me. No, I think I've officially crossed the line from shoe lover to shoe hoarder and it doesn't feel good.

What is it with femmes and shoes? Almost every femme I know, regardless of gender and gender-presentation, loves themselves some shoes. Seriously. They're pretty much the perfect accessory because everyone's gotta wear em!

Anyway, so I spied these gold high heels and my heart did its little lurch dance, so I thought I better try them on just for kicks. Absolutely stunning. They looked completely adorable with my capris and I was already planning on what I'd be wearing with them that Friday night. I walked the long aisle in them, admiring my poise and stopped at the mirror once more for another take. Within a minute or so, I felt the strain of my ankles and calves. I was reminded of two weeks prior when I wore a pair of heels all day and then went dancing in them. Now, I should mention that those heels were only two-and-a-half inches and were wedges to boot! I spent most of the night sitting down, feet screaming with pain and feeling rather ridiculous. Two of my friends knelt right down in front of me in the club and started massaging my feet, which was totally amazing and for the longish walk home that night, another friend actually traded their comfy sensible shoes for my sad little wedges. Talk about some great friends, right?

It hurts to say it, but my body wasn't made for high heels.

I have flat, wide feet and I'm fat. Not to say that being fat has anything to do with it, but because my feet don't fit heels correctly as it is, my 215-pound frame doesn't exactly work in my favor. I admire all of the fat babes I see out there, often girls bigger than me, donning flashy, sexy high heels and my heart totally bursts with respect and lust for them.

It didn't matter, I picked up the shoes and started making my way to the register arguing with myself about how hot they would look and how I'd only wear them when I knew I wouldn't be on my feet too much and all of that. As I got closer to the register, I realized what a freak I was being. These shoes, amazing and beautiful as they were, were not worth this sort of internal debate and compromising. I turned around, put the shoes back and quickly left the store before my weakness for their shiny gold splendor got the best of me.

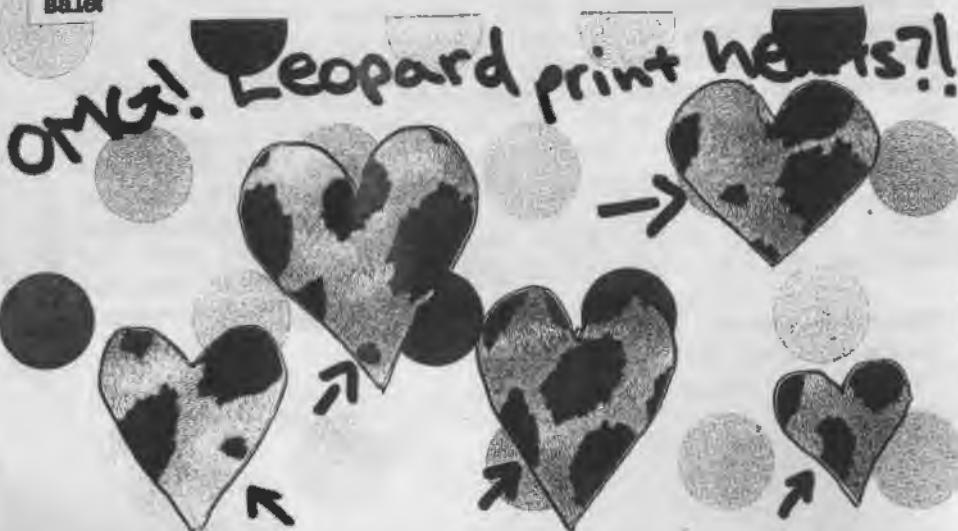
But it's not just high heels, really. With the exception of the short, two-inch heels on all of my boots, I only wear little, pointy-toed and ballerina flats and my feet are still all fucked up. At this very moment, I have two blisters from a pair of shoes that I am still breaking in after more than two weeks. My muscles on my ankles are often sore, my knees sometimes hurt and I'm pretty sure the muscle pain in my lower back and hips has more to do with working in a kitchen than I like to let on. They simply don't make cute little shoes that are also good for your feet.

What's a femme to do? Wear athletic shoes 24/7? As if that's even an option.

The gold heels got my brain reeling, why this foot torture? Quite honestly, I don't know. I ask myself, Is it worth it? and I look down at my beautifully clad feet and I'm like, "Oh, yes." I do know that I'm far too shallow to wear athletic shoes when I'm not at work and I don't feel like that's something to feel bad about. I can practically hear the battle cry of second-wavers condemning my femmes and I for caving to the patriarchy. I don't know about you, but my peeps and I couldn't give a fuck about what the patriarchy wants to see us wear. Snap!

The best I can relate it to is bondage (in that sexy, fun, consensual way and not the second-wave propaganda way), lingerie (particularly corsets, girdles and even bras "swoon!") and quite simply, the reclamation and queering of stereotypical standards of femininity and sexuality. When I'm corseted or girdle-bound, I feel a rush from the almost cartoon portrayal of femininity and the restrained movement is such a power play even if just with myself. It's a choice I made, mocking the societal standards of what is ethical or hot in a hetero-normative (read: tired and boring) way. I totally get off on it and it's absolutely become an extension of my identity. Like it or not, I will not justify that to anyone.

Shit, all of this talk of reclamation and queering femininity is really making me want to get those shoes. They were on sale!



JOURNAL ENTRY 04/15/07 ©georgette

Photo credit: KINKWILLIAMS.COM

there was a time about three or four years ago when

i didn't think i was femme.

where i dressed in

toobig clothes and wore cowboy boots to change my

walk to a swagger.

in retrospect,

i realize i was trying to prove myself.

i wanted everyone to know i was queer

as much as i knew i was.

i wanted them to notice me.

i wanted to be hot shit.

but i was never myself.

tonight i realized how far i've come.

i didn't learn to do femme from anyone.

i had it in me all along.

Living in a place as radical as Portland, OR has its privileges for us queers. This is the reflections of two friends whose femme and queer identity has been molded by the experiences of growing up in classically conservative and homophobic areas of the country.

KT: I grew up in Normal, IL. I love telling that joke! Except it's not a joke. Normal is not only the name of the town where I was born, raised and graduated high school; normal is also a suitable descriptor of the way of life and overall gestalt of the town. Normal is the home of State Farm Insurance Headquarters, Beer Nuts, and Steak and Shake Diners. It's a conservative, middle class town whose churches are only outnumbered by its strip malls and chain discount shopping stores. At election time the signs campaigning for Republican politicians nestle the yard ornaments in the chem-lawns of every ranch and bi-level house. A person's diet typically consists of white bread, casseroles, cigarettes and television. In a God-fearing town like this a young, progressive person faces challenges of finding tolerance and support, let alone inspiration. Mason and I have often compared and contrasted our childhood queer experiences. Laughing over bacon-grease salad and reminiscing homophobic high schools.

Mason: I lived through out the Carolina's my whole life but mostly settled down in Greenville, SC (of Dorothy Allison fame). My town was surprisingly progressive for it's location, with its influx of Europeans and damn Yankees constantly at odds with the older forces at work. Despite that, growing up queer was an adventure in a town best known for Bob Jones university (look it up, it's terrifying) and its handy proximity to the world's only KKK museum. My city was literally crawling with homos, but

the community as a whole was fearful and secretive. I had a girlfriend at 14, and although my primary friend group all identified as queer we still dealt with daily harassment from the verbal to being literally thrown down the stairs at school. I still live very much with that conditioning...breaking out in a cold sweat when asked to hold hands in public.

KT: Were there homos in Normal? Sure, but you weren't likely to meet any of them. I remember a short time when there was one gay bar downtown, and across the street there was a small women's bookstore (which was code for gay bookstore, and unfortunately there was no "backroom" for toys). The town cried out that our little town had become a mecca for gays from all the neighboring rural towns, that we would be swarmed by heathens! I wish. The bookstore didn't last long, but was later replaced by an "adult" store that no one poo-poo'd. Once, the mayor of my town was on the talk show Donahue to talk about why he refused to include sexual orientation in the non-discrimination laws. But growing up I did not meet my first gay person until I was 16. And even then it was only because I went to visit my sister at University and there was a gay man in the theater department.

Mason: Quite the contrary to KT, my town was full of homos. Atlanta was only a few hours away and the lesbian capital of the south (Asheville, NC) was close enough that my high school girlfriend and I would drive up for the day to cruise the loom store and the vegan burrito shop. I know that sounds flippant but I shit you not. When I made the move to college I ended up in Rock Hill, a conservative town with triple the dykes! We would all gather together after classes for light beer and pool at our little bar housed in a double wide trailer, the Hide-Away. A city literally crawling with blue-collar dykes, where every girl worth her salt had a big truck and butch-femme not only was alive and well but expected. I was so pleased with myself back then: snarly little butch with dark levi's and a bad attitude about feminine girls.

5 Of course I never quite fit my own community with my bad habits of fucking the butches, kissing the boys and doing everybody's nails.



KT: I don't remember ever meeting one lesbian, queer woman or genderqueer person who identified as femme in Normal. Once I finally tapped into the community, I found that all of the women had the exact same short haircuts, baggy jeans and loose T-shirts. It was how we identified each other. I didn't really question this identity at the time and adopted the standard look in hopes of landing myself a girlfriend. I met one lesbian who had long hair that she wore in a ponytail. This was a

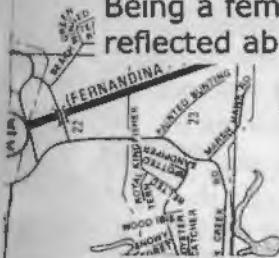
statement that she chose not to cut off her hair, but she did not identify as femme. There wasn't a vast array of gender identities and sexual identities, labels and anti-labels floating around. If you wanted acceptance into the community that would provide a safe haven from the conservative town, you had to fit in. Femme didn't fit in. Femme didn't even exist.

Mason: Femme very much existed in my community, but it was viewed as a necessary evil of sorts. To be gay was to be butch; to be butch was to date a femme and to be femme was to be suspect. The center of our world was our bar and a tribunal of old butches ruled that bar.

Working in the paper plants and cotton mills during the day, they came at night with their femme dates...classic southern beauties with big bodies, tight pants and mile high hair. They clearly held respect and respected in turn their femmes...but we baby dyke college brats were bad news. We fought and dissed, mocked and judged, dating the femme girls but faulting their femaleness. Those dangerous bi-sexuals who would seduce a butch just to leave her for a man. Those weak girly things who didn't know what it was really like to be GAY in the south. Those desirable objects to be caught and released like prize deer. It's so nice to reflect on your own bull shit past. The laughable image of me as butch, me the swishiest tranny fag bitch imaginable. My silly fat self

trying so hard to find a little community, posturing and pretending I wasn't just as dangerous as those femmes in the bar. Being a boy who didn't know boy was an option. Being a fag who made out with gay boys but would never let anything happen to maintain my lesbian identity. Being a femme who distrusted femininity, fearing what it reflected about me and my image.

Being a femme who distrusted femininity, fearing what it reflected about me and my image.



Our past experiences have forever made us grateful for what Portland has to offer and respect all the more those who stay in those towns and fight it out. To walk around without deep fear. To be respected for whom we are within our own queer communities. Say what you want about hipsters and downwardly mobile college students: but it feels damn good to be fat, femme and freaky and still have a place to call our own. 



NOT A SKINNY BUTCH.

BY

JACK RADISH

When I was a freshman in high school I met my first queer friend and realized that being queer was not the death sentence every media representation I had ever seen had made it out to be. Apart from realizing that questioning my sexuality and gender was not an automatic guarantee that my life would shortly become the next tearful Lifetime movie, I realized that my gender had options, and exciting ones.

My new friend was a fabulously femme fag who had amazingly over the top fashion sense, wore a lot of glitter all the time, was a sassy bitch and on top of all that he was a sweetheart. I learned so much about the kind of person I wanted to be from him and even today hold my high school image of him as one of my gender role models.

He was male assigned and skinny while I was female assigned and fat. I didn't know how to reconcile these differences at the time so having an identity like his seemed pretty unattainable. Once I had accepted that being a fat girl rendered the identity I wanted to claim unattainable, I did some problem solving and did what I saw as the next best thing: I came out as a lesbian.

After a few years, I still wasn't feeling it. Around this time, I started to learn about trans stuff. I met my first trans friends and much like had happened in high school, my whole view of myself and my possibilities opened up. By the time I finished reading *Gender Outlaw* by Kate Bornstein, my gender possibilities seemed only to be limited by my imagination and willingness to be open with myself. I started to really embrace being queer, being genderqueer, and finally came out as trans.

As soon as I realized I could be a boy, I remembered that first queer friend I knew in high school and knew exactly what kind of boy I wanted to be. Actually translating this new trans identity onto my body and into my life proved to be a lot harder than simply knowing it and dreaming about it though. Even if I could be a boy, I was still female assigned, always read as female, and I was still fat. I felt like the only way this gender I had in my mind and felt in my heart could really be understood was if I was skinny and male assigned or at least pretty "well passing."

I looked for ftm role models and came to the conclusion that as a fat ftm, my option was to be butch. So I tried to be butch. I wore the "trans boy uniform" (baggy jeans, collared shirts and a faded buzz cut, and hated it) and I tried to suppress all the things about me that were femme (read: all the things about me) and play up the butch stuff.

I didn't really fool anyone but I fooled myself. It got tiring and just as difficult and confusing as it had before, but I didn't know what else to do to feel accepted and acknowledged in my community and outside of my community as well. I always felt like maybe if I was skinny I could get away with being a little less butch or maybe if I was male assigned I could get away with being fat.

One day, I confided in a close friend, in a half whisper, "well, I mean, like... well I'm not really *butch*" It took so much strength to say out loud and even to a close friend, it felt like a huge risk. My friend put his hand on my shoulder, gave me a sassy look and said, "uh, yeah, we've noticed!"

His words made me feel a lot more comfortable femme-ing it up more, at least around close friends. While it felt great to know being a little bit femme now and then wouldn't cause me to lose all of my friends and would not cause everyone to go back to calling me "she", I wasn't ready to embrace femme completely yet and didn't know that I could.

For me, being fat was still a big fat thing I hadn't dealt with. I felt like the only fat person in my community (looking back, I was not the only one, but certainly no one talked about it and it never felt like something I had in common with people) and it didn't occur to me that the issues being fat brought up (not being able to find clothes that fit, feeling excluded from communities and from getting dates, feeling like very feminine looking body made it harder for me to be accepted as a boy) were not things I needed to be ashamed of.

I hid from coming out as femme because I was ashamed of being fat and I thought for sure people would see a fat femme trans boy as a complete joke.

Then I met a lot of fat femmes all at once. I had only been around this many other fat people once before (at fat camp when I was 15, a completely different story that I'd love to tell but for now I will just say there were a lot of positives and a lot of negatives), had never been around this many femmes, and had never ever met a fat femme trans boy in my life.

Suddenly I was hearing people call each other "fatty" as a term of endearment, seeing people celebrating being femme, hearing people actually talking about some of the feelings I had been struggling with of feeling excluded from communities and feeling like my identities canceled each other out.

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For the first time ever, I had friends with genders I could identify with without bringing up a million body image issues or feeling like I was not good enough. For the first time I had friends I could share clothes with (and wanted to share clothes with because they had great style).

I started to feel empowered by words like "fat" and "femme". I started feeling like my friends were talking about me when they talked about fat people. And I came out as fat.

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The only step I had left was coming out as femme. I finally felt comfortable being a fat femme boy who was trans and not butch and I wanted to claim femme so badly. One day, some friends were going to a Femme Affinity Group meeting. They asked me if I wanted to come. I knew that only self-identified femmes were allowed at the meetings. And I said yes.

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At that moment, all the parts of my identity came together. I realized that my gender and my identity was not worth having and was not mine if it could not handle being inclusive of all the parts of me. Any gender I felt in my heart could be mine if I said it was and if people didn't know what to do with that, who to compare me to, then they would just have to deal with it!

7
7
8
8
8
4

I am a fat and femme and a boy and trans. I won't say I don't still struggle with all my internalized trans-/fat-/femme-phobia telling me those identities are contradictory. But I don't let that stop me from owning them because I know that the empowerment I feel from claiming those parts of me together is worth the entire struggle.

"So You Think You Know Me..."

You are Shy. You are Reticent. You are Quiet. You are Reserved. You

are an Introvert. You are an INFP. You are an Artist. You are a Woman

You are an American. You are Puerto Rican. You are Poor. You are

Young. You are Gifted. You are a Musician. You are Cute. You are

Responsible. You are Sensitive. You are Thoughtful. You are a Prude.

You are a Lesbian. You are a Writer. You are Creative. You are a

Swinger. You are Masculine. You are a Bohemian. You are a Loafer.

You are Weird. You are Disabled. You are Smart. You are Funny. You are

Pretty. You are Anal. You are Depressed. You are a Girl. You are a

Poet. You are Sagittarius. You are a Child. You are a Femme. You are a

Dancer. You are a Fake. You are Boring. You are Stupid. You are Nice.

You are Good Person. You are Reluctant. You are Eager. You are a

Nerd. You are a Bitch. You are Polite. You are Rude. You are Intelligent.

You are Polish. You are Confident. You are a Photographer. You are a

Leader. You are Straight. You are a Good Listener. You are Patient. You

are Lazy. You are Mature. You are a Tom-boy. You are Feminine. You

are Neurotic. You are Sexy. You are Possessive. You are Violent. You

are Hip. You are Elusive. You are Cold. You are Alone. You are

Understanding. You are an Angel. You are a Stinker. You are a

Portland. You are Pansexual. You are a Painter. You are Kind. You are

an Episcopalian. You are an Actor.

Fuck! This could go on forever...

The only goddamned thing I've gotten from listening to people talk about me through the years was a huge headache and a sudden love for whiskey.

So what I've gathered from the many ways (and often contradictory ways) that people in my life have described and labeled me has made me feel that I'm either a really fucked up person or -- according to friends and family (who will always be there to switch a negative into a positive) -- I'm just simply being human (which is never a simple thing to be).

But I really don't know anymore. I thought I was over this whole "Who am I" faze bullshit when I was done with middle school and high school. I didn't think I would be sitting around at 24 years old, still contemplating who I am.

Well, I guess this wallflower has always been somewhat of a "late-bloomer."

The only thing I've truly known over these overwhelming years, with utmost certainty, is that I've always been very, very confused about who I am...and quite sure that I don't want to feel this way any longer.

By, D.A. Wood II

Why is it that everyone else out there seems to know me, but ME?

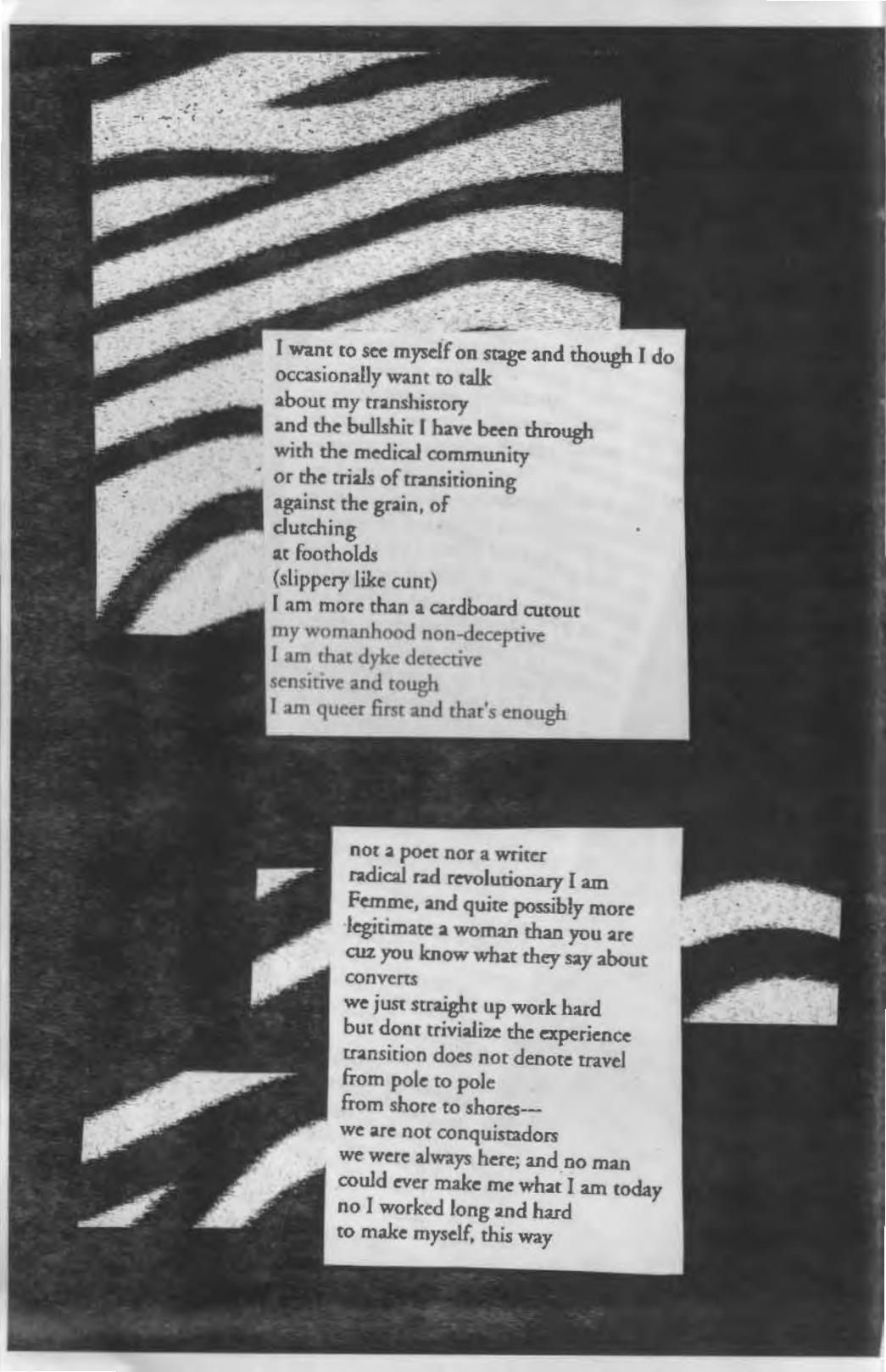
Footholds
By Katrina Enyeart

The list is longer than I'd care to count
our herstory depicting account after of account
the same damn stereotypes
of the un-woman, she believes a plastic
surgeon is going to grant her the life
society forbade her
(well) we don't all work like that
we consider it self-evident that
cosmetic surgeons are assholes
we cry and scream, but mostly hide
when we see ourselves on the screen
am I pathetic tranny now?
or maybe just deceptive. You see
we have to live in this punchline body
and we'll do a media analysis
of just how fucked up
our life is
thanks to that telling void
of voices selling roles
so kids can grow up fitting molds
just like my parents did, I
didn't break a mold
I was a free, floating, protoplasm.
clutching at footholds
hoisting myself to new heights
of assimilation
and the shame, of participation
in the oppression of your own people?
you know I'd rather be
invisibilized, than
demonized
when the strangest scapegoat for
who let the men in here?
This is dyke territory here.
you are much to weird and
in fact are exactly what we fear
we clutch
at footholds
of dyke assimilation
these neo-classical calculated
gender roles, 2.0
tailor made for your

sleepy Amerikan dreams
your counter-culture
ways and means
we count currency, like capitalists
and I don't have pride
sponsored by Miller Light
in a culture bent on a pitiful fight
for minimalism packaged as equality
we light fires under your asses
remind you that there is more
to queer than chances
at blending in
We are malcontent
we are deviant
we fuck gender as much as
gender fucks us
we are polyamorous
and running from messed up pasts
we have all lived our lies

we invented the beds we sleep in
and you can atleast provide the courtesy
of articulating the 3-dimensions
of our personalities
we are flattened to cardboard cutouts
plot points bringing trajectory and
comic relief and
I'm not fucking laughing
We already knew that transgender is a slur
and this fascination stinks of steps
toward some fleeting kind of self acceptance
we are the united federation of
ungrateful step-children
and we are through with shit

trannies, genderfucks
drag fiends and andronauts
we stand on the threshold
of a different liberation
we need more than unification
under bullshit umbrella terms



I want to see myself on stage and though I do
occasionally want to talk
about my transhistory
and the bullshit I have been through
with the medical community
or the trials of transitioning
against the grain, of
clutching
at footholds
(slippery like cunt)
I am more than a cardboard cutout
my womanhood non-deceptive
I am that dyke detective
sensitive and tough
I am queer first and that's enough

not a poet nor a writer
radical rad revolutionary I am
Femme, and quite possibly more
legitimate a woman than you are
cuz you know what they say about
converts
we just straight up work hard
but dont trivialize the experience
transition does not denote travel
from pole to pole
from shore to shores---
we are not conquistadors
we were always here; and no man
could ever make me what I am today
no I worked long and hard
to make myself, this way

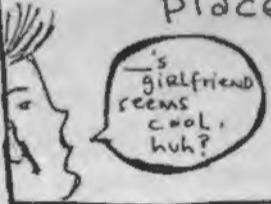
SINGLE & FEMME:

a quick comic
by georgette

ONCE, I WAS IN
LOVE.



EVERYONE NOTICES
YOU WHEN YOUR
LOVER* IS WITH YOU.
THEY INVITE YOU
PLACES.



ther
SEE
YOU.

*
ESPECIALLY
IF YOUR
LOVER IS
BUTCH/
ANDRO/
FEM/
NOT-
FEMME
APPEARING

* IT WAS LIKE I
disappeared
when
we
broke
up.
*
POOF!
* / / *

ME NOW
SOMETIMES
it can be
SO HARD
to be SINGLE
& FEMME IN
this TOWN.

BUT NOT ALWAYS.



there are SO
MANY of US.
AND we're
ALL AMAZING.

START ACKNOWLEDGING
VS. START SEEING

VS. hell,
ask us out
on
dates.

is cute.
date?
es
No
checkbox

WE PROMISE
you
won't
be
SORRY.

*
unless
you
want
to
be.
of
course.

WAN

dana rae parker: aka: dr. love - is a recent totally! "displaced" mississippian now livin it up in pdx. Ze enjoys short walks on the beach that end with making-out and sand in the ass crack. Passions include! creating a family of supportive radical folks, workin on internalized shit sizeism, the mental health industry, prison industry, capitalism and other violent things. Ze enjoys revolution and you!

georgette is a tough-ass outdoor femme. sure ways to her heart include long drives in the country, deep dark secrets, being unabashed, callused hands, unexpected kindness and singing in bed. you can send her your notes of love and adoration to laxlady4@hotmail.com



Venus Envy is an indoor femme, a spoiled brat, and a pillow queen. When she's not working for the man, she enjoys roller skating, taking candy from strangers, and collecting ironic kitten figurines. If you wanna collaborate and/or coordinate matching outfits, you should contact her! www.myspace.com/venusenvypdx



TED:

HOT
FEMMES

Jenny Bruso is a twenty-five year old, grrrl-identified, fat, Unicorn Femme, thrashed Peggy Bundy wannabe from Portland, Oregon. She likes to think of herself as an eternal optimist, hopeless overachiever, activist because she has no other choice, lover, fighter, crafter, zinester, aspiring homebody and a shit-starting bitch who means business. Compliment her footwear and she'll probably want to dance with you. All of her zines and projects can be seen at <http://www.notsorry.org>

Katrina is an anarchafeminist activist who is currently involved in radical healthcare initiatives and exploration of gender/queer theory. She is a femme identified dyke, musician, and occasionally an artist. Her interests are Queermosexuals, Revolution, and Evangelical Feminism. She also happens to be transgender. katenyear@gmail.com



Jack radish is a fat, femme, queer, trans and fabulous. he is interested in actively learning to be the kind of ally he wants folks to be to him. he grew up in modesto, california and bloomfield hills, michigan and is currently living in portland, oregon. he spends his time going to school at portland state university, organizing camp trans, being involved with FAG, writing, thinking, and laughing/crying with friends. if you want to talk to jack about "not a skinny butch", fat camp, or other stuff, you can email him at: jackrobinson@riseup.net

My name is D. A. Wood II. I am a 24 year old that feels more like I'm either 5 or 50 years old. I don't talk much. Everyone tells me that. I write, but no one knows that I write much either. This is my first submission to anything -- it's not everything I wanted to share, but it's a start...

Adrienne Graf is a twenty-three year old highest femme peacock extraordinaire from Portland, OR. She enjoys: femme community for life, reading books about psychology/self-help, energy crystals, witchcraft, dashing impeccably dressed dandy butches, wildflowers, best friends, cleaning her house in high heels, and being a doting mother to her 4 year-old chihuahua mix, Nibbles. Oh yeah, and she is a Leo. DUH. all love, admiration, courtship, correspondence, etc. can be directed to cisforcupcake@yahoo.com or www.myspace.com/iwantgold.

Shona is a middle aged dyke still refusing to grow up. Most of her friends don't know she secretly covets expensive Italian Shoes. thistlemouse@yahoo.com

FEMME AS FUCK!!!

BRAZEN AND TOTALLY AMAZIN'

The pursuits of KT Pumpkinpants include working the cornfields of Illinois, tap dancing in a spangley unitard, making health care accessible, brainy science studies and cuddling her cats. She is best met in person, and you can arrange a coffee date by emailing her at pumpkinpants1234@yahoo.com

Dreamboat Annie has lived in Lincoln City, Oregon; Bard College, NY; and San Francisco, CA. She currently resides in Portland, Oregon. She enjoys video, song + dance, among other things. She is accepting donations of clothes, accessories + cash towards her dream of opening a fat positive clothing store. PEACE. email: soiledpinnafore@hotmail.com

Amithyst Fist (Annie Flynn) is a queer fat high femme. She has a bleeding heart for youth, queers, genderfuckers and femmes. She is a member of F.A.T.A.S.S. PDX a radical fat cheerleading troupe. She is gonna take over the world by spreading glitter and chub love. Send her love letters at queerfatfemme79@hotmail.com

Mr. Mason is a femme identified trans-fag who loves to play dress up, bake pies and have photo-shoots. This pink wearing dirty old man is often seen roaming the streets with his fatty femme posse, eatin' snacks and fuckin' the binary. drop a line at fancyvestido@yahoo.com

JULY 2007